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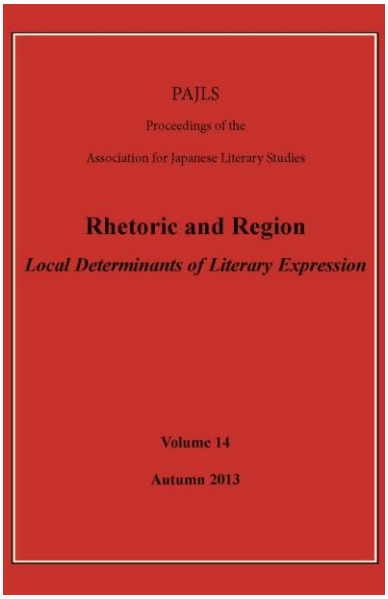


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# The Dialect Complex of Dazai Osamu as Seen in *Regretful Parting*

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## Introduction

It does not take a scholar to observe a sociolinguistic phenomenon: a peripheral dialect can be the source of humor, embarrassment, a sense of inferiority, or even the reason for discrimination. On the other hand, it can also be the source of pride, attachment to one's hometown, and the rallying point of solidarity for people from the same dialectal region. Moreover, individuals of a dialect facing speakers of a socially more prestigious language may experience a combination of inferiority and pride, revealing what may be called a pattern of dialect complex. This paper examines the dialect complex of Dazai Osamu as seen in his *Regretful Parting* (*Sekibetsu*, 1945) and, in doing so, attempts to reevaluate this largely ignored novel by an important modern writer.

## Standard Japanese, Tōhoku Dialect, and Dialect Complex

Japan is a mountainous country with numerous islands, a geographical setting prone to the development of dialectal diversity. The existence of dialectal diversity was noted as early as in *Man'yōshū*, Japan's oldest anthology of poetry (A.D. 759), which included the *azuma uta* (eastern songs) and *sakimori uta* (songs of the garrison soldiers), with eastern dialect traits distinct from the western dialect of the then capital Nara.[1] Throughout the centuries, people's observations of dialect diversity have been captured in such proverbs as "Kyō e tsukushi ni bandō sa" (京へ筑紫に坂東さ), showing how different particles are used in different dialects to convey the same meaning of "direction of movement," or "Nagasaki batten, Edo berabō" (長崎バッテン江戸ベラボウ) noting unique expressions found only in certain local dialects.[2]

People of the early 17th century already had the concept of standard language, evidenced by the way Kyoto dialect, as spoken by the courtiers, was used by Christian missionaries to define vocabulary and expressions of other regional dialects in dictionaries. The status of the Kyoto dialect was not immediately threatened after the seat of the government was transferred to Edo in 1603. But by the time of the Meiji Restoration in 1867, Edo dialect, mixed with elements absorbed from Kyoto dialect, was assuming the role of lingua franca among dialect speakers who had to communicate across dialectal boundaries. Shortly after the Meiji Restoration, the Meiji government moved the capital of Japan from Kyoto to Edo and renamed the latter Tokyo, the eastern capital. As part of its

[1] Masayoshi Shibatani, *The Languages of Japan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 185-186.
[2] Yaga Yasushi, "Hōgen konpurekkusu" *Gengo seikatsu* (March 1969): 38-39.

nation building program to join the "civilized" Western world after Tokugawa shogunate's self-imposed isolation of over two and half centuries, the Meiji government carried out a national scale dialect survey in 1903 to establish Tokyo dialect as *hyōjungo*, the official standard language.[3] With the subsequent nationwide adoption of the state authorized Japanese language textbooks based on the *hyōjungo* and the extension of compulsory education from 4 years to 6 years in 1907, Japan started the enforcement of the dialect of the new capital of Tokyo. This enforcement brought about a sense of inferiority and devastating linguistic experiences to speakers of peripheral dialects. The most notorious of this involves the use of the humiliating *hōgen satsu,* "the dialect tag," to be hung around the neck of a student who spoke his or her local dialect at school.[4] Prejudice against speakers of peripheral dialects continued in adult society, leading to tearful letters appearing frequently in newspapers and magazines and, in at least a few cases, suicide.[5]

The Tōhoku region, in northeast Honshū, is economically less developed and Tōhoku dialect is linguistically more removed from the standard language and harder to understand for people of other regions. For these reasons, the general perception of Tōhoku dialect has been, and still is, associated with negative stereotypes such as "countryside, heavy accent, snow country, farmers, old people," or "less intellectual, less expressive." Moreover, such a negative view is shared by young Tōhoku dialect speakers as well. It has been pointed out that such a phenomenon resulted more from the influence of the mass media than from inherent linguistic features of Tōhoku dialect. Whatever the reason is for such a phenomenon, the undisputed fact is that speakers of the Tōhoku dialect are more susceptible to a sense of inferiority and dialect complex. Shimakage Chikai (1902-1983), a commentator from Fukushima, noted how he felt that Tōhoku dialect "sounds rich in local color and interesting" when spoken in the Tōhoku region but sounds awful when spoken in Tokyo. Noda Tayoko (1890-1970), a folklorist from Aomori wrote how, when traveling away from home, the biggest challenge for people from the Tōhoku region was their language. "The ordeal was imposed on us to keep our mouth shut when we first came to Tokyo. It was an effort not to utter our 'bad language.'" Similarly, writers Ishizaka Yōjirō (1900-1986), Miura Tetsurō (1931-2010) and Inoue Hisashi (1934-2010), all from Northeast Japan, recalled how they went through devastating linguistic experiences when they first came to Tokyo to attend college. They felt keenly a sense of inferiority and became stutterers after being laughed at publicly for their accent. In the case of Inoue, from Yamagata Prefecture, he even found himself buying the train ticket one stop beyond his destination and then walking back the extra distance on a daily basis because his difficulties

[3] Moriyasu Masabumi and Ariyama Taigo, ed. *Kindai bungaku no fūdo* (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1980), 155.
[4] Masayoshi Shibatani. *The Languages of Japan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 186.
[5] Moriyasu Masabumi and Ariyama Taigo, ed., *Kindai bungaku no fūdo* (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1980), 156. Also see Mainichi Shimbun Chihōbu Tokuhōhan, ed., *Tōhoku hōgen monogatari* (Akitashi, Japan, 1998), 53-54.

in pronouncing the "t" sound in "Takadanobaba," his destination station. Eventually, he took a year off from college due to the debilitating stress brought about by such linguistic experiences. According to a recent study, dialect complex is experienced by Tōhoku students attending college in Tokyo today just as it was experienced by their predecessors in the 1920s through the 1960s, as was the case with the above three writers.[6]

In fact, there is a hierarchy of status for peripheral dialects. The hierarchy has not only been established by scholarly investigations but also confirmed by the concern expressed recently by a Japanese mother—who has lived in Europe for over 30 years—about her daughter's coming study abroad in Osaka in 2007. She wanted her daughter to learn the pure Tokyo dialect but was worried that the daughter might pick up the less prestigious Osaka dialect instead. That Tōhoku dialect was at the bottom of the hierarchy in her mind was revealed by the lady when she added: "It would be devastating if my daughter ends up speaking *zūzū-ben*," the Tōhoku dialect.[7]

**Dazai Osamu's Dialect Complex**

Writer Dazai Osamu (1909-1948), the focus of this paper, was born a speaker of none other than the Tōhoku dialect, or, to be exact, the dialect of Tsugaru, the extreme northern tip of Honshu, where he lived until he graduated from high school.

Dazai could never completely get rid of his Tsugaru accent despite the fact that he left his hometown to live in Tokyo when he was 21. For example, when he addressed his wife directly, he could not say "Oi" as a native Tokyo husband would do, but would say "Oe" instead, with the second vowel somewhere between "i" and "e," a typical feature of the Tsugaru dialect. He would poke fun at his own Tsugaru accent. Sometimes, when he was unsure about the standard language for a particular word or expression, Dazai would ask for help from his wife who was from Kōfu, part of the Kantō region. Occasionally, one can find Dazai's use of particles at odds with the standard language, showing the influence of his native dialect.[8] He also wrote that his mentor Ibuse Masuji (1898-1983) had gone through the manuscripts of his early works to help him get rid of the traces of Tsugaru dialect in them.[9]

Since he was young, Dazai was a sensitive and self-conscious person. For example, in "Memories" (Omoide, 1933), one of his first stories, he wrote the following:

> After my enrollment in high school, I was wearing a student cap with my *hakama* even when I went to the public bathhouse. Seeing my image reflected in shop

[6] Kumagai Shigeko. "Junankyoku Tōhoku hōgen" *Shimin kagaku* 3 (July 2011): 72-73.
[7] Kumagai Shigeko. "Junankyoku Tōhoku hōgen" *Shimin kagaku* 3 (July 2011): 77.
[8] Tsushima Michiko, *Kaisō no Dazai* Osamu (Kyoto: Jimbun shoin, 1978), 119-124.
[9] Dazai Osamu, *Guddo bai* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1972), 41.

> windows of the street, I would bow slightly at the reflected image and smile at him.[10]

From his early days, Dazai felt that he was constantly being watched. The eyes watching him were not just those of other people but also his own. Numerous passages can be found in his semi-autobiographic writings that testify to his self-consciousness. The following one, for example, shows how he was obsessed about his own face:

> I was absorbed by my own face. When tired of reading, I would pull out a hand mirror and watch in fascination the various facial expressions I made, smiling, frowning, pretending lost in contemplation with both hands supporting my face. I learned how to make people laugh with my facial expressions, narrowing my eyes, wrinkling my nose, extruding my lips as far as I could, making myself as cute as a bear cub.[11]

Similarly, the following passage shows how he developed an early sensitivity about apparel.

> I became very picky about apparel when I was still very young. I would not wear a shirt with a button missing from the sleeve. White flannel shirts are my favorite outfit. The collar of an undershirt must also be white. I always made sure that one or two inches of that white collar were exposed and visible.[12]

Given his sensitivity, self-consciousness, and the enforcement of Japan's official standard language, it is reasonable to believe that Dazai had developed a dialect complex stronger than that of most of his peers. Going through his works, we can find a deep attachment to Tsugaru dialect. The attachment is seen, for example, in "Playing Sparrow" (Suzumeko, 1935), a piece written entirely in the Tsugaru dialect and dedicated to his mentor Ibuse Masuji. It is a prose poem in musical rhythm that tells of the unrequited love of a young monk for the daughter of the general store owner in the form of children's play when the snow starts melting on the Tsugaru Plain. Writing a piece in his native dialect reveals his attachment to his hometown and the nostalgia he felt for the nature of the northern plain.

More often than not, however, we find evidence that testifies to a sense that Tokyo dialect is superior to Tsugaru dialect in his mind. For example, the following passage, about his first trip to the city of Aomori to attend middle school, is revealing about Dazai's attitude towards the standard language on the one hand and his native dialect on the other.

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[10]Dazai Osamu, *Dazai Osamu zenshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1989), 25. (Hereafter DOZ. All translations are mine unless noted otherwise.)
[11] DOZ, vol. 1, 31.
[12] DOZ, vol. 1, 15.

> As this was the first time the young man had put his feet on the soil of a real city, he decided to present his best self. Thanks to his over-excitement, his language behavior went through a change as soon as he arrived at this capital city of the northern tip of Honshu: he started to talk in the Tokyo dialect that he remembered from magazines for young adolescents. To his disappointment, however, the language that the maids of the inn where he stayed spoke was exactly the same dialect as that of the people in his hometown—the two places were merely 25 miles away from each other.[13]

Similarly, when Dazai's alter ego visited Tokyo during the winter break when he was a freshman in high school, his Tōhoku accent betrayed him when he tried to talk in street-smart Tokyo speech.

> Something happened that freshman year that made me change my ways. Having come to Tokyo for the winter recess, I flung aside the entrance curtain to an *odenya* bar one evening and walked in dressed to the hilt. With the nonchalant assurance of a man-about-town, I told the waitress, "Make it a hot flagon. Mind you, make it hot, now."
>
> It was hot alright, but I still managed to swallow the sake. Then, having gotten my tongue untied, I let go with every bit of bluster I had memorized for the occasion. And when I had uttered my final sentence—something like, "What the hell're you talking about?"—the waitress smiled brightly and asked in total innocence, So you're from Tōhoku?
>
> She probably meant it as a compliment, but this reminder of my provincial speech quite sobered me.[14]

Sometimes, Dazai's dialect complex demonstrates a twist in his feelings about his hometown and native dialect, as seen in the following episode from his "Returning Home' (Kikyorai, 1942), which is based on his visit to his hometown in August 1941 to see his ailing mother. It was his first visit home after 10 years of absence.

> The train arrived at Aomori Station at 8:00 a.m. the following morning. Even though it was mid-August, it was still rather chilly. A foggy drizzle was falling. As we were changing the train to the Ōu Line, I went to the platform to buy a boxed lunch.
>
> "How much is a box?"

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[13] DOZ, vol. 3, 48.
[14] Osamu Dazai, *Crackling Mountain and Other Stories*, translated by James O'Brien (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1989), 129.

> "___ sen!"
> "How much?"
> "___ sen!"
> I understood the "sen!" part, but had no clue as to what the vendor said about the specific price. After asking my question three times, I finally realized that it was 60-sen. I was stunned by this failure.
> "Kita-san, did you understand the vender's words?" [I asked my travel companion.]
> He shook his head in earnest.
> "Of course you wouldn't. Even *I* didn't. –Well, I don't mean to pretend that I've become an Edokko who speaks perfect Tokyo dialect. I am a country bumpkin born and raised in Tsugaru who has constantly been laughed at for my Tsugaru accent. But after 10 years of absence, I don't even understand my native Tsugaru dialect when I encounter it all of a sudden. How unreliable human beings are! Being away for 10 years, and you can't even communicate with your own folks in your native tongue!" I felt that I was presented with some concrete evidence that I had betrayed my hometown.[15]

Dazai wrote that he picked up the Tokyo dialect from magazines for adolescents as a middle school student, as cited above. But it would be more accurate to say that he learned it at school—after all, Dazai, born in 1909, was the first generation of students following the national adoption of state-authorized language textbooks based on the standard language and the implementation of the 6-year compulsory education. The combination of his sensitive nature and the enforcement of the *hyōjungo* in Tōhoku region schools would be a perfect formula for the development of dialect complex for anyone.

**Dazai's Dialect Complex as Seen in *Regretful Parting***

Dazai's dialect complex is expressed much more extensively in his novel *Regretful Parting*. Completed in February 1945, *Regretful Parking* tells of the life of the prominent Chinese writer Lu Xun (1881-1936), known in the novel by his real name Shū Jujin or Shū-san, when he was a medical student in Sendai. The main story is set in 1904-1906, around the time when Japan was at war with Russia. It traces the crises leading to Lu Xun's decision to abandon a career in medicine to become a writer. Early on, Lu Xun tells the narrator why he chose to study medicine: his father died a victim of a quack after a long, dragged out illness and many sham "prescriptions." He believes that by studying medicine not only will he be able to cure people like his father, but he can also help enlighten people on the power of science and thereby make China a stronger country in the same way introduction

[15] Dazai Osamu, *Hashire merosu* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1985), 205-206.

of Dutch medicine led to the Meiji Restoration in Japan, or so he learned from a translated history of Meiji Restoration.

Subsequently he is shown observing Japan's victory over Russia and trying to determine the secret of Japan's success as a modern nation. The conclusion he comes to is that Japan gets its power from its unique "polity," namely Japan is a divine country ruled by an unbroken line of the royal blood. Just as young Lu Xun is about to embrace this philosophy, he is shocked at a slide show in class in which a Chinese civilian is to be executed by Japanese soldiers for having spied for the Russians—the Russo-Japanese War was fought on Chinese soil. He is further appalled by the fact that other Chinese in the slide watch the spectacle in complete apathy while the Japanese students in the classroom all clap hands and shout banzai cheers. This incident confirms Lu Xun's realization that his most urgent task is not to keep people strong-bodied but to enlighten their minds. He resolves to give up his medical studies and devote himself to literature, believing that the latter is the most effective to enlighten China. While he is in Sendai, he receives unusual help from Professor Fujino, who not only corrected the notes Lu Xun takes in his anatomy class till the page is covered with comments, but also corrected grammatical errors, all in red. When Lu Xun says good-bye to Professor Fujino, he gives Lu Xun a photo of himself. On the back are written the characters s*ekibestu*, meaning "Regretful Parting," thus the title of the novel. For the rest of his life, Lu Xun cherished the memory of the kindness and encouragement of Professor Fujino whose photo was always hung on the wall of his study above the desk as a constant inspiration from his most respected teacher.

Dazai's dialect complex is seen, first of all, in his characterization of the narrator of the novel. The narrator is modeled after Dazai himself in his dialect background, but parallels are obvious between the narrator's dialect complex and that of the above-mentioned Tōhoku writers and students attending college in Tokyo. For example, not only does the narrator come from Tōhoku, but he is from the countryside. Like the Tōhoku writers and students, his sense of linguistic inferiority turns him into a lone wolf.

> That year there were 150—no, it could be more—freshmen who came to Sendai Medical College from all around Japan. These students formed different groups according to where they came from, such as the Tokyo group, the Osaka group, and so on. Wherever they went, whether it was school campus, or downtown Sendai, students of the same group would walk around merrily together, making much noise along the way.
>
> Meanwhile, I was the only one who came from a rural middle school. As I had a heavy country accent, on top of being slow in speech, I didn't have the courage to join the other freshmen and to trade jokes with them. On the contrary, I became more introverted. Posing as someone unsociable and settling in a lodging behind the Prefectural Government Building quite removed from school, I never had friendly conversations with any of my schoolmates, to say nothing of having a

> real talk with the family of the landlord of my lodging. People from Sendai also speak with quite a heavy Tōhoku accent. When it comes to my country accent, it is hopelessly worse. It is not that I cannot speak Tokyo dialect if I try hard enough. But with my rural origin being public knowledge, it is really embarrassing to be pretentious and try to use the prestigious language. But that is the sort of psychology only people from the countryside would understand. Therefore, I ended up finding myself in a situation in which I would be laughed at if I put on full display my countrified accent, but I would be laughed at even more if I tried to use the standard speech. The only option left for me was to shut up and keep quiet.[16]

If the narrator's dialect complex can be traced to Dazai's own experience, the description of Shū-san's language in the novel is entirely Dazai's creation. The two exchange words for the first time when they encounter each other unexpectedly on a trip planned separately to the famous Sendai resort of Matsushima. The narrator reflects as follows about the speech of Shū-san, who he does not realize at first is from China.

> There is accent in his speech. He is not from Tokyo either—I immediately came to this conclusion. As I was constantly self-conscious about my own countrified accent, I was particularly sensitive to the accent of other people's speech.
>
> As I said earlier, I was afraid of associating with students from big cities like Tokyo or Osaka, and never had any real conversations even with the family of my landlord. If I am not a misanthrope, I certainly had more than my share of bashfulness. It was truly a miracle that a person like myself should have been able to become friendly with Shū-san, a student from a land across the sea, far more distant than Tokyo or Osaka. I didn't realize it at the time, but when I look it back now I discovered that the miracle, while doubtless due to Shū-san's noble character, was accounted for as well by the less noble fact that I was completely liberated from the depression I suffered as someone from the countryside only when conversing with Shū-san. The fact is that when I speak with Shū-san, my countrified pronunciation did not bother me a bit. Not only that, amazingly enough, I could even crack a joke or two with him, or make some witty comments in a light-hearted way.[17]

Clearly, it is the narrator's dialect complex—a reflection of Dazai's own—that serves as the driving force of the association between himself and Shū-san. Their shared experience of struggling with the Tokyo dialect leads to a solidarity between the two.

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[16] DOZ, vol. 7, 14.
[17] DOZ, vol. 7, 18 and 20-21.

> On that day, however, I was completely enraptured by my discovery of a perfect partner with whom I could try without fear my Tokyo dialect, the hallmark of an Edokko, something I had been longing for in my mind for a long time.
>
> Sometimes, I let myself get carried away and deliberately twisted my tongue and talked slangy like an Edokko. If I were talking to a Japanese schoolmate, my conversation partner would probably have burst into laughter in astonishment to see someone from the countryside trilling his words in such a strange and amusing way. But this friend from a distant land did not seem to have noticed that, for he never laughed at me even once for my speech. Moreover, it was I who asked him such questions as "Don't you think my way of talking strange?" When I did so, Shū-san would answer in earnest: "Not at all. You have a strong modulation when you speak and it is very easy to understand." Well, in the final analysis, what started the close friendship between me and Shū-san is really nothing else but my discovery of someone who had to struggle more than I did to speak the Tokyo dialect. It may be an odd way to put it, but I did feel confident that I am more at home with the Japanese language than this student from China.[18]

Another character, Professor Fujino, is later added to the small coterie of Shū-san and the narrator. Though loosely based on Lu Xun's own writings about Professor Fujino, this character is largely Dazai's creation, particularly his dialect background. The historical Fujino Genkurō (1874-1945) was from Fukui Prefecture, where Hokuriku dialect is spoken, while the fictional Professor Fujino is from Kansai. It is his struggle with the standard language that makes him a confederate of Shū-san and the narrator.

> During his lecture, his attention seemed to be awfully distracted by his own speech. As I always had to struggle with my country accent, I was very sensitive to, and sympathetic with, similar labors by other people. I felt particularly strongly about it when I listened to Professor Fujino's lecture. He spoke with thick Kansai accent. He seemed to be trying, with great efforts, to hide his accent. But his Kansai accent was so heavy that it could not be hidden even from a foreigner like Shū-san. Thus viewed, the close alliance the three of us formed later, Professor Fujino, Shū-san and myself, resulted from no other than like attracting like in the *Nihongo fujiyū-gumi,* or "the group lacking in the freedom of the Japanese language."[19]

It should be noted again that the speech of both Shū-san and Professor Fujino are Dazai's creation, which Dazai used as a literary device in *Regretful Parting* to portray characters and to develop the plot. But it is Dazai's own dialect complex that makes this device available in the first place.

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[18] DOZ, vol. 7, 20-22.
[19] DOZ, vol. 7, 51-52.

## Negative Reception of *Regretful Parting*

*Regretful Parting* has received little critical attention despite Dazai's status as a major writer in modern Japanese literature.[20]

Two reasons can be cited for the lack of critical attention to this work. The first is the shadow of the involvement of Japan's military government behind the writing of the piece. On November 5-6, 1943, the Greater East Asia Conference was held in Tokyo. As soon as the Conference was over, the Japanese Cabinet Information Bureau and the Japanese Literature Patriotic Association decided to sponsor the writing of literary works that would help promote the five principles adopted in the Joint Declaration of the Greater East Asia Conference. In 1944, Dazai Osamu was commissioned to write on one of the five principles, the principle of "Independence and Amity" (*dokuritsu shinwa*). *Regretful Parting* is the result of this commission.

Jay Rubin has characterized the two commissioning offices. On the Cabinet Information Bureau, he points out that it was "an agency devoted to 'positive' propaganda mark[ing] the beginning of the truly fanatical suppression of any but the most worshipful references to the imperial house."[21] On the Japanese Literature Patriotic Association, he writes:

> The association's great goal, as spelled out in its charter, was to awaken the people to a new world view; specifically, to "establish our world view as writers of the Empire..."
>
> If one hoped to function at all as a writer during these [war] years, when the Cabinet Information Bureau kept a blacklist of undesirable authors, one had to be a member of the association.[22]

By November 1943, the United States had started its counterattack, Italy had surrendered and withdrawn from the Axis Nations, and Japan had already suffered such major defeats as the loss of Midway Island, New Guinea, and Guadalcanal. The Greater East Asia Conference itself was in fact a desperate effort by the Tōjō regime to boost

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[20] Many scholars have noted the lack of attention to this novel. Ozaki Hotsuki, "*Daitōa kyōdō sengen to futatsu no sakuhin*," *Bungaku*, 29 (August, 1961): 20. Kamiya Tadataka, "*Sekibetsu*," collected in Tōgō Kokumi and Watabe Yoshnori, eds. *Sakuhinron: Dazai Osamu* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha shuppan, 1974), 249. Kawamura Minato, "*'Sekibetsu' ron: 'Daitōa no shinwa' no maboroshi*" *Kokubungaku* (April, 1991): 70. Nonomiya Noriko, "*Sekibetsu*," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* (September, 1999): 121. To the best of my knowledge, other than Donald Keene's three-page long discussion of it, there is not a single serious study of this novel in English. See Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 1056-1059.

[21] Jay Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 256.

[22] Jay Rubin, 274.

Japanese morale and to rescue the rapidly fading dream of the Japanese Empire.[23] Commissioned by such offices at such a time, the novel understandably became questionable in postwar Japan.

The second reason is Dazai's own catering to the authorities in the novel. One way Dazai does this is to have his characters parrot some wartime slogans. One of the characters of the novel is Tsuda Kenji. When Tsuda first appears in the story as a student union officer, he lies to the narrator and tells him that Professor Fujino has warned Japanese students against associating with Shū-san because of the possibility that he is a Russian spy. The narrator then confronts Professor Fujino to see whether the Professor has indeed betrayed Shū-san, who is grateful to him and holds him in great respect. In the ensuing scene of confrontation, Professor Fujino expresses his confidence in Japan's national polity instead of answering directly the narrator's blunt question. Part of the confrontation goes as follows:

> "Did you tell the students that when two countries are at war, people from a third country are likely to be spies?"
>
> "What are you talking about? Look at this--"
>
> The Professor pushed the newspaper on the table toward me. The following headline caught my eye:
>
> ROYAL VISIT TO THE CHRYSANTHEMUM EXHIBITION AT ASAKUSA PALACE / 4912 GUESTS FROM HOME AND ABROAD
>
> I understood the Professor without reading the text of the article...and he went on serenely: "*The great virtue of our polity--should I call it that?--I feel all the more confident in it during time of war*."[24] (Italics mine)

Another example of Dazai's catering to the authorities is found in the introduction of a little girl in the story. The girl is the daughter of the narrator's landlord, and she has an uncle fighting the Russians as a soldier in Siberia. At one point, she asks Shū-san to proofread her letter to the uncle. Some buzzwords of the time are seen in this letter.

> Dear Uncle, I am sorry I neglected to write to you last year. But I hear that you have been fighting bravely on the plains of Siberia, where even the moon is frozen, capturing Russian POWs, and joining the dare-to-die corps...

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[23] On January 22, 1944, Tōjō Hideki stated in a Diet hearing that the ultimate goal of the five principles adopted at the Greater Easter Asia Conference was to ensure that "the Greater East Asian countries cooperate to bring the war to a successful conclusion and to liberate Greater East Asia from the fetters of the United States and Britain." See *Asahi Shinbun* January 23, 1944.

[24] DOZ, vol. 7, 63-64.

> *Let us pray that all of us remain in good health and devote ourselves to His Majesty and to the Great Empire of Japan*.[25] (Italics mine)

It is not hard to imagine how pleased the commissioning officers were with the praise of Japanese soldiers fighting in the front, and the absolute loyalty to the emperor expressed in the letter, especially because it was expressed by a child.

But what probably pleased them more is the part of the novel that introduces the change of Shū-san's views on Japan as a result of his observation of Japan's victory over Russia and his renewed effort to study Japanese history. We are told that one snowy night, Shū-san visits the narrator for the first time in days and reveals his changed view of Japan. Upon hearing the revelation, the narrator comments on Shū-san's change:

> Japan's glorious victory gave even Shū-san, a foreigner, a shock so strong that it is beyond my imagination... It seems that he made a renewed effort at the study of Japan...This time, he bought books on Meiji Restoration history, not only in Chinese translation but in the original, buried himself in them and eventually made significant revisions to his view of Japan that he had held up till then.
>
> "*In Japan, there is such a thing as the power of polity*," he would say with a sigh.
>
> *Although there seems to be nothing extraordinary in what Shū-san had discovered, I feel that this is a point I wish to emphasize with all the strength I have...He started saying that Meiji Restoration was by no means initiated by scholars of the Dutch Learning...The fountainhead of the thought of Restoration, in the final analysis, must be traced back to none other than the National Learning...Together, the scholars who were studying the thoughts of our remote ancestors showed us the broad road to save our country: namely, realization of the polity of our country and the rule of the Emperor. Amaterasu the Sun Goddess laid the foundation of our country first, and then, following the Divine generations, Emperor Jimmu carried on the heritage. Japan is a divine country ruled majestically by ten thousand generations of unbroken lines of royal blood. It is the revelation of this true essence of Japan that is the motivating power behind the Meiji Restoration.*[26] (Italics mine)

Dazai also attempted to please the authorities by downplaying the humiliation that Lu Xun received in Sendai. Professor Fujino's kind help led to the harassment of young Lu Xun in the form of an anonymous letter. Telling Lu Xun to "repent," the letter accuses him of knowing the test questions in advance from Professor Fujino and that it is the leak

[25] DOZ, vol. 7, 82. This letter was cited verbatim by Dazai from a Sendai newspaper published during the Russo-Japanese War. See Tsushima Michiko, *Kaisō no Dazai Osamu*, 208.
[26] DOZ, vol. 7, 79-81.

of the test information that enabled him to pass the exam that he would otherwise have failed. The historical Lu Xun felt deep humiliation by this anonymous letter, both for his country and for himself. He thus wrote about this incident later in his essay "Professor Fujino": "China is a weak country and the Chinese must therefore be an inferior people. Any grade that is higher than 60 points [out of 100] would simply be beyond their own ability." But in the novel, the letter is said to result from a rivalry between Tsuda and another student for the position of the student union officer, and the anonymous writer is said to really stand in awe of Lu Xun and to have written the letter only "out of a perverted reverence" for him.[27] Similarly, Dazai does not present the slide show incident as a turning point for Lu Xun in deciding to give up medicine for literature as a means to enlighten his people, as historical Lu Xun wrote repeatedly. But rather, he tries to argue that Lu Xun decided to turn to literature because he liked literature in the first place—otherwise he would not be able to pursue that road—and because of the influence of the rise of modern Japanese literature at the turn of the century.[28]

Given the nature of the commission and passages of the novel catering to authorities, it is not surprising what attention the novel does receive has been decidedly negative. For example, Takaki Tomoko and Akagi Takayuki believe that *Regretful Parting* is without question a novel that extols the war since it was a work commissioned by the two offices.[29] In his influential comments made shortly after the war, Japan's leading Lu Xun scholar Takeuchi Yoshimi states that Dazai showed "little understanding of the humiliation Lu Xun received" in Sendai[30] and that the "Shū-san" as portrayed in the novel is "the author's self-portrait."[31] Moreover, Takeuchi regarded the novel as a piece of collaboration and changed his view completely about Dazai as a wartime writer.

> However, the impression *Regretful Parting* gives me is terrible. I feel I have been betrayed, having believed that he was the only writer who would not cash in on times of war. With this single work, I no longer like him and feel like asking: Et tu, Dazai Osamu?[32]

Takeuchi's comments influenced many later studies of this novel. For example, Ozaki Hotsuki criticizes *Regretful Parting*: "The hero that appears in it is not Shū Jujin the

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[27] DOZ, vol. 7, 264-265.
[28] DOZ, vol. 7, 111-114.
[29] See Takaki Tomoko's article "*Dazai Osamu: Teikō ka Kuppuku ka*," collected in Nishida Masaru, ed., *Sensō to bungakusha* (Tokyo: San'ichi shobô, 1983), 178-179. For Akagi Takayuki's comments, see his article "*Senji ka Dazai Osamu no ichi sokumen*," collected in *Shinpen Dazai Osamu kenkyū sōsho, 1* (Tokyo: Kindai bungei sha, 1992), 19.
[30] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "*Fujino Sensei,*"in *Kindai bungaku* (Februry and March, 1947).
[31] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "*Kachō fūgetsu,*" in *Shin Nihon bungaku* (October, 1956).
[32] Dazai Osamu zenshū geppō 3, Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1957. Quoted by Takaki Tomoko in her article "*Tenkō ka kuppuku ka*", collected in *Sensō to bungakusha*. ed. by Nishida Masaru. (Tokyo: San'ichi shobō, 1983), 165-166.

Chinese student but Dazai himself, a wounded young man."[33] Arai Takeshi, Chiba Masaaki, and Kawamura Minato approach *Regretful Parting* along the same lines.[34] Takeuchi's influence is also clear in the few comments made by Western scholars on the novel. For example, Donald Keene says that in Dazai's hands, "Lu Xun emerges as a slightly Sinicized version of Dazai himself, rather than as a pillar of independence and amity" [35] and *Regretful Parting* is the "worst of Dazai's longer works."[36] Similarly, James O'Brien comments that Lu Xun "scarcely represents the celebrated founder of modern prose writing in China. He exists, in some measure at least, as another Dazai surrogate in disguise."[37]

**Dazai's Attempts at Integrity, His Dialect Complex, and Consistent Quality**

The negative reception seems to be well-founded, given the nature of the commission and Dazai's above-mentioned sycophantic attitude toward authority. However, a close reading of the text indicates that this assessment is not as fair as it seems to be. This point is supported by evidence from numerous elements revealed by a close reading of the novel.

The first element is found in the Postscript to *Regretful Parting*. Dazai opens the Postscript in the following way:

> It is true that *Regretful Parting* is a novel resulting directly from the commission from the Cabinet Information Bureau and the Japanese Literature Patriotic Association, but even without the commission from the two offices, I would still have written it someday anyway, having been gathering materials and pondering long about its structure.[38]

There is evidence that Dazai had indeed started reading about Lu Xun well before the Greater East Asia Conference or its Joint Declaration. For example, Dazai read Oda Takeo's *A Biography of Lu Xun*, the first biography of Lu Xun written in Japan, as soon as

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[33] Ozaki Hotsuki, 31.
[34] Arai Takeshi believes that Dazai was trying to impose his own view of life, namely "*umarete sumimasen*" onto the protagonist of *Regretful Parting*. See Arai Takeshi "*Futatsu no Ro Jin zō.*" Chiba Masaaki concludes that the author of *Regretful Parting* "only used the image of Lu Xun to portray Dazai's own image." See Chiba Masaaki, "*Dazai Osamu to Ro Jin: 'Sekibetsu' o chūshin to shite*," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* (June, 1983): 130. Similarly, Kawamura Minato comes to the conclusion that, "in the final analysis, the Lu Xun in Regretful Parting turns out to be nobody else but Dazai himself." See Kawamura Minato, "*'Sekibetsu' ron: 'Daitōa no shinwa' no maboroshi*" *Kokubungaku* (April, 1991): 75.
[35] Donald Keene, *Landscapes and Portraits: Appreciations of Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Kodansha International LTD., 1971), 313.
[36] Ibid., 1059.
[37] James O'Brien, trans., *Dazai Osamu: Selected Stories and Sketches* (Cornell University East Asian Papers), Number 33. 5-6.
[38] DOZ, vol. 7, 129.

it was published in March 1941.[39] Therefore, it is likely that Dazai was indeed planning on writing about Lu Xun. One can, of course, ask whether the 1944 commission merely accelerated Dazai's plan to write the novel, or whether it also imposed prescribed certain elements on him. The latter is undoubtedly true. It definitely imposed some elements After all, a lecture was sponsored on the 5 principles for the candidates of the commission and there was a screening process by the two offices for all commissioned works.[40] Dazai's above-mentioned passages obviously satisfied the expectations of the authorities—the novel was approved and published during the war.[41] But, by the same token, one can also ask whether Dazai incorporated anything into the novel to maintain his integrity and whether there are elements in the novel that represent Dazai's consistent quality as a writer. After all, "going against the tide, whatever it might be, whether the authority of the wartime military or of the postwar antimilitary, was typical of Dazai."[42] It is my argument here that both of these questions can be answered in the affirmative.

This brings us to the second element of the novel, the framework of the story. The narrator of *Regretful Parting* is prompted to write the journal—the main body of the novel summarized above—by a local newspaper reporter who interviews him on Lu Xun's student days in Sendai and publishes an account of it on the local newspaper at the present time of New Year's Day, 1945. As presented in the story, the reporter is one of those who spare no efforts to be the mouth-piece of the military authorities. For example, as soon as he confirms that the narrator was indeed a schoolmate of Lu Xun, he reveals the purpose of his visit by citing the "buzzword" of the day—and Dazai's assigned subject to write about—Sino-Japanese amity. He says:

> As a matter of fact, I have read Lu Xun's essay entitled "Professor Fujino," and I learned from it that during the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 and 1905, Lu Xun was in Sendai Medical College and was taken good care of by Professor Fujino Genkurō. It then occurred to me that I should write an article on this for the New Year's issue of our newspaper as a sort of timely anecdote of Sino-Japanese amity.[43]

Later the result of this interview is serialized in the local newspaper for several days in the form of the narrator's reminiscence under the title "The Predecessors of Sino-Japanese Amity." Even though the serialized account is "rather interesting"[44] as a story, the narrator is very upset after reading it. He declares,

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[39] DOZ, vol. 7, 419-420.
[40] DOZ, vol. 7, 423, 433.
[41] The actual published book did not see the light of the day until September 1945 due to the heavy bombings of Tokyo. All the preparations and paperwork was completed before the end of the war.
[42] Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature in the Modern Era* (New York: Henry Hold and Company, 1984), 1025.
[43] DOZ, vol. 7, 6.
[44] DOZ, vol. 7, 7.

> All three of us, Shū-san, as well as Professor Fujino and myself in the story, appear as total strangers to me. I couldn't care less what it says about me. But as my respected Professor Fujino and Shū-san are presented totally different from their images at the bottom of my heart, it is quite an agony to read it.... Now filled with guilt towards Professor Fujino and Shū-san...it is probably not meaningless if I can write down faithfully the images at the bottom of my heart [while I am still alive].[45]

Dazai is obviously criticizing Japan's wartime propaganda when he explains why the reporter wrote in the way he did. Through the voice of the old doctor, Dazai says that the newspaper story is "socially and politically motivated"[46] and as such the reporter "had no choice but to write that way."[47] In real life, Dazai found himself in the same position as the newspaper reporter; but in fiction he says via the narrator that he despises writings produced out of political and social motivation and that he intends to be faithful to Professor Fujino and Lu Xun as a respectful disciple and friend. Given the framework of the novel, it makes sense to believe that there are two agendas in the novel, one overt that caters to the authorities, the other hidden that attempts to maintain his integrity in writing this novel.

The third element is what was mentioned earlier, namely the *Nihongo fujiyū-gumi*, or "the group lacking in the freedom of the Japanese language," whose members include the three main characters, Professor Fujino, Shū-san and the narrator. On the obvious level, all three of them are presented as having difficulties with the standard language. The narrator is self-conscious at his lack of freedom and is ill at ease with anyone from Tokyo. He feels most like himself only when he is with someone who also has problems with the standard speech. One can say that "the group lacking in the freedom of the Japanese language" amounts to nothing more than a device to create humor in a novel at the expense of people of peripheral dialects. But the persistent reference to the lack of freedom of speech at a time when no free speech was possible should ring a bell to us. I believe that this "group lacking in the freedom of the Japanese language" in *Regretful Parting* represents Dazai's most direct protest against the suppression of the freedom of speech in wartime Japan—and a clever way to prove his integrity when writing a commissioned work. Moreover, as the whole concept of *Nihongo fujiyū-gumi* is built on Dazai's own dialect complex, it is an extension of Dazai's writings about his dialect experience and represents Dazai's consistent integrity as a writer.

In fact, the device of dialect complex is used more extensively in the novel than just forming the solidarity of the three-member coterie. It is also used to ridicule the

[45] DOZ, vol. 7, 7-8.
[46] DOZ, vol. 7, 7-8.
[47] DOZ, vol. 7, 7-8.

authorities. This is achieved by introducing the character Tsuda Kenji, "the first person who tried to interfere with the friendship between me and Shū-san."[48] Tsuda is from Tokyo First Higher School, the most prestigious higher school in Japan and the cradle of Japanese elite bureaucrats. He is arrogant and dictatorial. But crucial to the argument of this paper, he speaks perfect Tokyo dialect.[49] The way Tsuda conducts himself reminds one of officers from the Cabinet Information Bureau. For example, at one point he warns the narrator to be watchful of foreign students: "If you are not careful when you deal with foreigners, we are all going to be in trouble. Japan is at war right now. Never forget that."[50] At another time, he lectures the narrator on how to be duplicitous when dealing with foreign students. He says that one should "first of all give them the impression that Japanese people are all kind,"[51] because "the secret of diplomacy" is "war plus diplomacy." And therefore, he continues, one must make sure to be "kind to them and guide them at the same time,"[52] "be kind to them and keep a watchful eye on them at the same time,"[53] because "when two countries are at war, anyone from a third country could be a spy."[54] He even cites his own example to teach the narrator the skills of deceit: "It is for this reason that I dragged that foreign student [namely, Shū-san] into my lodging so that I could sell Japanese diplomatic policies to him while taking care of him."[55]

Tsuda is glib, but he is severely caricatured in the novel. For example, when dragging the reluctant narrator to a restaurant, Tsuda keeps complaining that there is nothing good to eat in Sendai. "The soba is too oily…the eels in Sendai have tendons in them…the cutlet is so tough that it tastes like the soles of shoes."[56] But no sooner has this eccentric epicure made these bizarre pronouncements than the narrator looks deep into his mouth and discovers that Tsuda turns out to be a denture wearer at a tender age.

Furthermore, while Tsuda reprimands the narrator for failing to be a good host and diplomat by picking up the tab for Shū-san when they visited Matsushima, thus damaging Japan's image, the next moment Tsuda becomes brazen-faced and forces the narrator to empty his wallet and pay the entire bill for their meal. The narrator is left speechless.

If we compare the overt agenda and the hidden one, we are struck by their contrast. In the hidden agenda, Dazai is seen comfortably at home, protesting against the propaganda of the official media, ridiculing the self-appointed diplomat Tsuda Kenji, forming his spiritual alliance of the "group lacking in the freedom of the Japanese language;" in the overt agenda, on the other hand, Dazai is laboring to incorporate prescribed materials such as Professor Fujino's confidence in the power of polity, the abrupt introduction of the little

[48] DOZ, vol. 7, 52
[49] DOZ, vol. 7, 54.
[50] DOZ, vol. 7, 56-57.
[51] DOZ, vol. 7, 60.
[52] DOZ, vol. 7, 60.
[53] DOZ, vol. 7, 61.
[54] DOZ, vol. 7, 61.
[55] DOZ, vol. 7, 61.
[56] DOZ, vol. 7, 54.

girl, the long-winded passages on Shū-san's revised view of Japan, and the divine rule of Japan by the emperor which the narrator wishes to emphasize with all his strength.

The literary values of the elements from the two agendas are also different. Those parts that relate to the revealed agenda are very thin in literary value: they contribute little to the structure or the development of the story. For example, Shū-san does not have to realize that "Japan is a divine country ruled by ten thousand generations of an unbroken line of Emperors" in order to turn from medicine to literature. The slide show helped him make up his mind. Or, as Dazai himself argued in the novel, Shū-san has always loved literature and the rise of modern Japanese literature at the turn of the century makes him believe in the power of literature to enlighten his people. Similarly Professor Fujino does not have to cite "the great virtue of [Japan's] polity" in order to dismiss Tsuda Kenji's lie, nor does the narrator have to emphasize the philosophy of Japanese imperialism "with all the strength I have" in order to restore the true images of his teacher and friend. By contrast, what is on the hidden agenda has been carefully designed and forms the organic part of the novel. For example, the introduction of the newspaper reporter makes the narrator feel obliged to restore the images of Professor Fujino and Shū-san, and this arrangement, in turn, provides the framework for the entire novel. Similarly, the creation of "the group lacking in the freedom of the Japanese language" serves not only to bring Professor Fujino, Shū-san, and the narrator together, but it serves also to set them apart from "mouthpieces" of the times such as Tsuda Kenji. One could go so far as to say that without the framework of the novel and the device of the *Nihongo fujiyū-gumi* built on Dazai's dialect complex, the structure of the novel would collapse and much of its appeal would disappear.

When the second edition of *Regretful Parting* was to be published after the war in 1947, Dazai cut over thirty manuscript pages,[57] including one passage as long as twelve consecutive printed pages.[58] All the parts quoted above from the revealed agenda were deleted. There is no doubt that Dazai cut these passages because they became politically incorrect after the war, but the fact that it is possible to cut so much without destroying the novel speaks for itself about the different natures of the two agendas in the novel.

## Conclusion: Towards a Balanced Assessment of *Regretful Parting*

As mentioned above, Takeuchi played an important role in the formation of the widespread negative reception of *Regretful Parting*. One of Takeuchi's complaints is that Dazai failed to bring out the humiliation of the anonymous letter incident and the slide show incident to Lu Xun. Specifically,

> The harassment [anonymous letter] incident and the slide show incident are treated as separate incidents, which lead to Lu Xun's coming out of the classroom

[57] See "Editor's Notes to *Sekibetsu,*" DOZ vol., 12, Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1956. 375.
[58] DOZ, vol. 7, 484.

> in the middle of the class in the novel; the two incidents fail to deal a serious blow to Lu Xun in the novel and, for that reason, Lu Xun's turning from medicine to literature is made to appear to be prompted by external forces; the hatred for the writer of the anonymous letter is not made clear, which makes Lu Xun's gratitude towards Professor Fujino a rather low-level sentiment. All of these result in the failure of the novel to bring out the humiliation with which Lu Xun left Sendai.[59]

But Takeuchi's criticism of Dazai is unfair. In writing the novel about the most prominent Chinese writer, Dazai was in debt to the expertise of not only Oda Takeo, whose biography of Lu Xun he had read before and who made his library available to Dazai, but also to Takeuchi Yoshimi. The following acknowledgment from the Postscript to *Regretful Parting* makes this clear:

> Mr. Oda has published *A Biography of Lu Xun*, a masterpiece as beautiful as spring flowers…. Without Mr. Oda's support and help, a lazy person like myself could hardly have had the courage to tackle an ambitious work such as this novel… Just as I was about to start writing this novel, and totally unexpectedly, Mr. Takeuchi also had his publisher deliver to me a copy of his book entitled *Lu Xun*, a work as sobering and engaging as autumn frost… The book was published when he was serving in the army overseas. Before he was sent to the front, however, he told his publisher to send a copy to me when it came out and the publisher obliged… This fact alone was an honor beyond my imagination. But, to my greater surprise, the "Afterword" of the book notes that this prominent scholar of Chinese literature has long been a fan of my poor novels. I was embarrassed by this unexpected fact and, at the same time, also inspired like a young boy to apply myself to this work.[60]

There is evidence that Dazai actually based his treatment of the two incidents on Takeuchi's own book. For example, Takeuchi did not read Lu Xun's reminiscence as reliable biography but as literature. For this reason, he questioned Lu Xun's own account of how the slide show incident dramatically turned him from medicine to literature, which, in his view, created a widely believed myth—thus Dazai's comments that Takeuchi's book is "as sobering and engaging as the autumn frost."

> Lu Xun decided to turn from medicine to literature after watching a slide show while in Sendai Medical College. This has become a widely accepted story and is an example of how some of his biographic episodes have become mythologized.

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[59] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Fujino sensei" *Kindai bungaku* 9 (March, 1947): 71.
[60] DOZ, vol., 7, 129-130.

> But I have doubts about how true this story was historically. More than likely, it was not true. [61]

Dazai, through the narrator of *Regretful Parting*, thus comments on this matter:

> It has been some time since people started talking about how, thanks to the so-called Slide Show Incident, the idea suddenly occurred to Lu Xun [that literature is more effective than science in enlightening people's mind]… Lu Xun himself also reminisced in his writings how he turned from medicine to literature thanks to the so-called Slide Show Incident… But I feel something is not quite right in this story.[62]

It is not hard to see the influence of Takeuchi's view on Dazai's treatment of the incident.

Similarly, Dazai seems to have obtained hint from Takeuchi for his downplaying of the anonymous letter. Recall that the historical Lu Xun felt deep humiliation in the anonymous letter, both for his country and for himself. Takeuchi points out that it is the combined humiliation brought to Lu Xun by this incident and the slide show incident that turned Lu Xun away from Sendai, if not from medicine to literature.[63] But Dazai could hardly let Shū-san leave Sendai in humiliation—that would go against the principle of "Sino-Japanese amity." The incident could not be ignored either since it was such a well-known part of Lu Xun's Sendai experience—it is documented in Lu Xun's essay "Professor Fujino." Here Dazai found himself in a predicament. The only option available, it seems, was to somehow minimize the impact of the incident on Lu Xun. That is exactly what Dazai did. And he did it by creating a scene of a farewell party for Shū-san in the narrator's lodging. At this party, Yashima, the author of the anonymous letter, is said to stand in awe of Lu Xun and to have written the letter only "out of perverted reverence" for him. In other words, the letter was the result of a misunderstanding. But crucially, Dazai may well have been prompted into this treatment by Takeuchi's following comments: "This incident [of anonymous letter] was soon resolved after it was proven that the whole thing was a misunderstanding on the part of the classmates" (この事件は、間もなく同級生たちの誤解が証明されて解決した).[64]

It should be pointed out that Takeuchi's characterization of the anonymous letter incident as a "misunderstanding" is mistaken. In Lu Xun's own words, the letter was a slanderous rumor. The matter was resolved only after the slanders' unfounded accusation was exposed to the daylight, and Lu Xun's innocence—and that of Professor Fujino's—proven. Here is what Lu Xun wrote about how the incident ended:

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[61] Takeuchi Yoshimi, *Ro Jin* (Tokyo: Nihon hyōron sha, 1944), 65-68.
[62] DOZ, vol. 7, 111-114.
[63] Takeuchi Yoshimi, *Ro Jin*, 70-71.
[64] Takeuchi Yoshimi, *Ro Jin*, 70.

> I reported [about the anonymous letter] to Mr. Fujino. A few students who knew me well were indignant too, and we protested to the executives [student union officers] against their rudeness in examining my notes under another pretext, and demanded that they publish the results of their investigation. So finally, the rumour died.[65]

This mistake by Takeuchi has never been noted, nor has the connection between this mistake and Dazai's handling of the incident. This can perhaps be explained by Takeuchi's status as a prominent scholar on Lu Xun—everything he said is considered definitive and no one dares to challenge his authority—thus the negative reception of *Regretful Parting* persisted.

One consequence of the persistence of the negative reception is that other obvious mistakes in the study of this novel also go unnoticed. One example is Donald Keene's summary of the novel, part of which goes:

> It is in the form of a journal kept by an old doctor who recalls student days in Sendai when he was a friend of the young Lu Hsun. He is inspired to write this account by a reporter *who…has requested an essay that will suggest the friendship between Japan and China*. (Italics mine)[66]

As we have seen earlier, instead of requesting an essay from the narrator, the reporter first interviews the narrator and then adapts the interview into an "interesting" but "socially and politically motivated" story. Keene's summary makes it unclear whose essay is eventually serialized in the newspaper. If it is the reporter's, then, he does not have to "request" an essay from the old doctor; if it is the narrator's, then he would lose the reason to write another account. Needless to say, with this mistake, the summary misses entirely Dazai's point in creating the framework to maintain his integrity.

Much more influential is Takeuchi's theory that the Lu Xun portrayed in the novel is "the author's self-portrait," as mentioned above. But this theory is not convincing. All the main stages of Lu Xun's intellectual growth depicted in the novel—his rejection of Chinese herb medicine due to the bad experience of his father's illness and death, his criticism of the Confucian doctrine of filial piety, his initial belief in the power of science thanks to the translated history of Japan's Meiji Restoration and later realization that it is more important to enlighten people's mind and subsequent turning from medicine to literature—are based on Lu Xun's own writings, mostly notably his essays "Professor

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[65] Lu Xun, *Lu Xun, Selected Works*,, vol. 1, translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1980), 408.
[66] Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 1057.

Fujino" (Tengye xiansheng, 1926), the introduction to *Battle Cry* (Nahan, 1923), his first collection of short stories, and"The Illustrated Twenty-four Virtues of Filial Piety" (Ershisi xiao tu, 1926).[67] (Needless to say, Dazai's representation of Lu Xun's views on Japan's polity is part of Dazai's catering to the authorities.) After all, the young Lu Xun, with a burning desire to enlighten his people and serve his country, was the antithesis to Dazai, "a writer lacking in political reliability or even citizenly virtues."[68]

It is true that Dazai put some of his own words into Lu Xun's mouth in the novel. For example, when Lu Xun tells the narrator his conviction of the power of literature (*muyō no yō*), he cites, almost verbatim, an anecdote from Dazai's short story "A Tale of a Snowing Night" (Yuki no yoru no hanashi, 1944) in which a sailor surviving a shipwreck only to be swallowed again by the waves because, due to an instant sense of humanity, he hesitated to disturb the lighthouse keeper's family dinner and ask for help.[69] In fact, Dazai's own image is projected on several characters in the novel. For example, Tsuda Kenji as a young denture wearer reminds one of Dazai's own medical history. According to Dazai's dentist, he became a denture wearer in 1941 when he was 32. Before that, he had decayed milk teeth, making him look like a Heian Period Japanese lady with blackened teeth. Moreover, Dazai had the habit of exposing his badly decayed teeth with both of his hands pulling his cheeks sideways, making himself look like a noh theatre actor wearing a female demon mask.[70] We can also see the image of Dazai in Yashima, the author of the anonymous letter, because not only is Yashima from the Tōhoku region, but, just like Dazai, he is also a well-dressed dandy from a wealthy family. But Dazai projected himself most extensively and consistently on the narrator of the novel. Just like Dazai, for example, the narrator skips classes at school. The parallel between Dazai and the narrator is most extensive in the various manifestations of their dialect complex, as analyzed above. Therefore, it makes much more sense to say that the narrator is Dazai's self-portrait. If we agree about the object of Dazai's "self-portrait," then his attempts at integrity in this novel becomes obvious, and thus the need to reevaluate it.

It is not the intention of this paper, however, to argue that Dazai was an anti-war hero. He was not, as evidenced, for example, by his "December 8th" (Jūnigatsu yōka, 1942), which shows him as one of the average Japanese of the day cheering Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, or his "Bridegroom" (Shinrō, 1942), which shows his support of the military government. But as critics have pointed out, these pieces represent only Dazai's momentary reactions right after the outbreak of the Pacific War. For the most time during the war, he was trying to write the kind of literature he wanted to write.[71] But that proved to be difficult because of the increasingly strict censorship. His short story entitled

[67] DOZ, vol. 7, 444-445.
[68] Donald Keene, "The Artistry of Dazai Osamu" *The East-West Review* I: 3 (Winter 1965): 250.
[69] See DOZ, vol. 7, 117 and Dazai Osamu, *Roman tōrō* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1983), 277.
[70] Tsushima Michiko, 170-172.
[71] Akaki Takayuki. *Senjika no Dazai Osamu* (Tokyo: Musano shobō, 1994), 49.

"Fireworks" (Hanabi), for example, was censored in 1942 for "being inappropriate for the times." After this, he tried to write on historical topics to reduce the risk of being censored. But when his *Minister of the Right Sanetomo* (Udaijin Sanetomo) was published in 1943, he was accused by "loyal Japanese" of presenting Sanetomo, the third Kamakura Shogun and a poet who was assassinated by his nephew, as a Jew and therefore being unpatriotic.[72] Still Dazai did not give up. It is at this point that the commission of *Regretful Parting* came. As critic Kawamura Minato notes, "at a time when it is difficult to write anything, the efforts to seize every chance possible for the sake of literary creation should not be brushed aside categorically as unworthy of attention."[73]

Wartime spanned nearly the entire writing career of Dazai Osamu. How to evaluate his wartime works greatly affects the overall assessment of this writer and determines how much we can find out about the dynamics of literature and art during the war. During the dark days of the war when many writers either abandoned writing for good, or served willingly as a tool of propaganda for the military, Dazai was among those who carried on the tradition of Japanese pure literature.[74] *Regretful Parting*, written by such a writer under such circumstances, deserves a more balanced evaluation.

[72] Dazai Osamu, *Goodo bai* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1972), 49-50.
[73] Kawamura Minato, *Sekibetsu ron*, cited in Akaki Takayuki, *Senjika no Dazai Osamu* (Tokyo: Musano shobō, 1994), 164.
[74] Okuno Takeo, "Kaisetsu" Dazai Osamu, *Sekibetsu* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1973), 303. Sōma Seiichi, *Hyōden Dazai Osamu daisanbu*, cited in Akaki Takayuki. *Senjika no Dazai Osamu* (Tokyo: Musano shobō, 1994), 57.

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